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Police interrogation practice in Slovenia

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ABSTRACT

Interrogation techniques are well explored, but in Slovenia it has remained unknown what interrogation techniques are used and what the basic characteristics of suspect interrogations are. The Slovenian interrogation manual proposes some coercive interrogation techniques and neglects their weaknesses. The aim of the current study was to examine Slovenian police officers' beliefs as to the basic characteristics of their interrogations and whether techniques proposed by the manual are used in practice to begin to provide some insight into what actually happens in such interrogations. A survey instrument was used to obtain self-report data from a sample of criminal investigators. From 86 completed questionnaires it was found that a typical interrogation of a suspect lasts around 90 minutes and is not recorded. Interviewers typically use three interrogation techniques namely (i) conducting interrogations in isolation; (ii) identifying contradictions in the suspect's story; and (iii) confronting the suspect with evidence. Findings suggest that some coercive interrogation techniques are used in practice (e.g. offering moral justifications, alluding to have evidence of guilt, good cop/bad cop routine, and minimization). The study is the first insight into the practices of Slovenian investigators when questioning suspects. Differences among general, white-collar and organized crime investigators are also discussed.

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Introduction

Historically, criminal investigators have used a wide variety of interrogation practices, which are intended to break down a suspect's resistance to admit and gain a confession. Contemporary approaches in some parts of the world involve more subtle techniques which are partly based on psychological manipulation of suspects (Redlich & Meissner, 2009; Walsh, Redlich, Oxburgh, & Myklebust, in press). Today, a considerable amount of knowledge about interrogation techniques has been accumulated. Prior naturalistic studies have found a constellation of differing techniques being employed (Kassin et al., 2007; Leo, 1996a; Soukara, Bull, Vrij, Turner, & Cherryman, 2009). In their taxonomy of interrogation methods, while not examining police interrogations alone, Kelly, Miller, Redlich, and Kleinman (2013) also identified a range of interrogation techniques, which they classified into six interrogation domains (e.g. rapport building, confrontation,

evidence disclosure, etc.). Others suggest that interviewing strategies can be divided into four types (i.e. legalistic, physical, cognitive, and social) where each of them can be applied either in a non-coercive or a coercive manner (Goodman-Delahunty, Martschuk, & Dhami, 2014). Interrogation techniques may also be broadly divided into several dichotomised categories, some of them incorporating forms of coercion and manipulation. For example, some of the more well-known classifications are minimization and maximization (Kassin & McNall, 1991), humane versus dominant (e.g. Häkkinen, Ask, Kebbell, Alison, & Granhag, 2009), and accusatorial versus information-gathering (see Meissner, Redlich, Bhatt, & Brandon, 2012).

A central aim of manipulative approaches is to obtain confessions from those believed guilty (Redlich & Meissner, 2009). Although fallible, confession evidence is common, potent, and highly regarded in criminal law (Kassin, Kukucka, Lawson, & DeCarlo, 2013). As such, usage of accusatorial approaches by the police is, perhaps, not to be unexpected. Accusatory or coercive interrogation techniques involve three constituent parts. Firstly, custody and isolation, where the suspect is detained and experiences anxiety. Next, confrontation, in which the suspect is treated as guilty and faced with incriminating evidence against him or her, and the suspect is also prevented from denying his or her involvement in the crime. Finally, minimization, where an interrogator changes interrogation method into sympathetic attempts to gain the suspect's trust, using face-saving excuses or justifications for the crime. This latter tactic involves the police implying lenient consequences if the suspect provides incriminating statements or a full confession (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). Police interrogations of these types have been argued to elicit coerced-compliant and coerced-internalized false confessions from non-guilty suspects (Gudjonsson, 2003; Leo & Ofshe, 1998). Representative of coercive interrogation methods has been the Reid Technique (Inbau, Reid, Buckley, & Jayne, 2013). These techniques can be effective in eliciting true confessions, in most cases as a result of social influence, found in studies of conformity, obedience to authority, and compliance to requests (Redlich & Meissner, 2009). However, it is necessary to note that coercive interrogation techniques have never been subject to scientific validation/evaluation. As such, they are based on the authors' authority and their uncorroborated assumptions (Vrij, 2008). Among the commonly used coercive interrogation techniques are (i) appealing to the suspects' self-interests; (ii) offering the suspects' moral justifications; (iii) interrupting suspects' denials and objections; (iv) implying evidence of guilt is at hand; (v) appealing to suspects' religion or conscience; (vi) minimization; and (vii) maximization (Kassin et al., 2007). Some of these techniques have been shown to be less effective in gaining confessions (see Holmberg & Christianson, 2002; Kelly, Redlich, Evans, & Meissner, 2014) and unethical (Vrij, 2008). Even so, they are used in investigations throughout North America and in some Asian countries (Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014).

In contrast, those information-gathering interviewing methods focus on searching for reliable facts rather than obtaining a confession (Bull & Soukara, 2010). Such a model is typified by the British PEACE model in which the interviewer seeks to establish rapport with the suspect and uses direct, positive confrontation and challenges to obtain (self-incriminating) information (Meissner et al., 2012). Research suggests that offenders may be more willing to collaborate with investigators if they are treated in a respectful and ethical manner (Vanderhallen, Vervaeke, & Holmberg, 2011). Therefore, the PEACE model rejects the use of manipulative techniques. Further, standard practice in England

involves audio or video-recording custodial interrogations (Walsh & Bull, 2013). Although the PEACE model has increasingly received international recognition, it is not the only information-gathering model (see Fahsing & Rachlew, 2012).

The PEACE model promotes non-judgmental communication with the use of open-ended questions, active (and non-interruptive) listening, and avoidance of inappropriate questions such as closed yes-no, multiple-choice, leading, and forced-choice questions (Snook, Luther, Quinlan, & Milne, 2012). In addition, the PEACE approach may be complemented with other interviewing techniques, such as the Strategic Use of Evidence which may provide some scientifically based guidance concerning the suspect's guilt or sincerity by the strategic (and late) disclosure of evidence in interviews (Granhag & Hartwig, 2015; Granhag, Strömwall, & Hartwig, 2007). Withholding evidence seems to be an efficient technique that provides more reliable veracity judgements than disclosing them early in an interview (Tekin et al., 2015; Walsh & Bull, 2015). Unfortunately, examinations of real-life suspect interviews suggest that investigators use recommended questioning practices rarely (Clarke, Milne, & Bull, 2011) and even the PEACE trained interviewers struggle to consistently implement good practices (Soukara et al., 2009). This maladaptation of given training has been found in several field studies, regardless of either geographical domain or interview model (Dando, Wilcock, & Milne, 2009; Kebbell, Milne, & Wagstaff, 1999; King & Snook, 2009; Leo, 1996a; Walsh & Bull, 2010; Walsh & Milne, 2007). A consistent finding of these studies is officers' modifying the model, learned in their training, due to various reasons (e.g. perceived difficulty, efficiency or lack of necessity of certain tactics in fulfilling the aim of the interview/interrogation).

Research findings also show that rapport building approaches are more effective at eliciting true admissions than accusatory or coercive approaches (e.g. Evans et al., 2013; Goodman-Delahunty et al., 2014). Both information-gathering and accusatorial methods can increase the likelihood of obtaining a true confession from a guilty suspect, but only the accusatorial method significantly increases the probability of obtaining a false confession from an innocent suspect (Meissner et al., 2012). The reasons for such erroneous outcomes, among others, might include the police increasing both the psychological pressure upon suspects and their dependence upon interviewers, minimizing the importance of the offence, and creating the impression that the suspect has no other choice but to confess, all of which might lead to increased compliance/suggestibility (Gudjonsson, 2003). Such practices are not part of the information-gathering model, such as PEACE, thus the risk of false confessions is argued to be lower than in accusatorial models. However, assessing the efficacy of interrogative models and techniques is not an easy job, because police interrogations normally do not consist of only one technique. Interrogators use a constellation of techniques, and the effectiveness of an interrogation depends on the combination or sequence of techniques applied (Walsh & Bull, 2011). As such, a technique's effectiveness might not be the same when it is used alone or when it is used in combination with other techniques (Kelly et al., 2013).

While interrogation techniques are relatively well explored, this is not the case in Slovenia, which is one of the Central European countries situated between Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Croatia. The Republic of Slovenia gained its independence in 1991 after its separation from the then Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In the following years the old legal order was gradually replaced by a new one that mainly follows the German continental model of legislation and is consistent with European Convention of

Human Rights (ECHR). Until 1991, Yugoslavian (and therefore Slovenian) law enforcement experts followed the development of interrogation practices elsewhere, particularly the Reid technique (Inbau et al., 2013). Therefore, this technique was well-known and considered in interrogations by police officers, but it was never fully applied because according to the then criminal law police deceit and trickery was prohibited. The first Slovenian police interrogation manual appeared in 2003 as an internal document written on 30 pages that was never published. Here, some ideas of authors who promote coercive interrogation techniques were proposed (e.g. Inbau et al., 2013; Walkley, 1990; Zulawski & Wicklander, 1993) and the manual could be considered as based on the accusatorial approach (Areh, Zgaga, & Flander, in press). This interrogation manual is the only one that includes psychological manipulation with suspects in Slovenian language. It is available to police officers and it has been used in their training.

The aim of the current study was to examine police interrogative practice in Slovenia. The present study is the first of its kind (as far as the authors know) to examine such practices in Slovenia. As such, it remained unknown what interrogation techniques were being used and what were the basic characteristics of suspect interrogations. It was hypothesized that interrogation techniques that have been promoted in the Slovene interrogation manual (e.g. maximization, minimization, rationalization, and guilt projection) would also be evident in police officers' beliefs of their contemporary practice. Earlier field research concerning interrogation with suspects in North America have found that investigators often engage in coercive interrogation techniques that are proposed by interrogation manuals (King & Snook, 2009; Leo, 1996a). The Slovene interrogation manual is the only freely accessible literature on interrogation techniques available to police officers, therefore it may seem reasonable to assume that they would follow it. However, as has been previously noted, the existence of guidance provides no guarantee of any faithfulness in it being followed.

It has been stated elsewhere that investigators typically believe that most suspects are guilty (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004). From their initial beliefs a self-perpetuating process may emerge by which an interrogator asks even more guilt-presumptive questions and conducts more aggressive interrogations. This may lead to the apparent confirmation of erroneous beliefs (Kassin, Goldstein, & Savitsky, 2003). Such erroneous beliefs may be perceived as a risk factor for the occurrence of coercive interrogation; therefore, the aim of the current research was also to establish the existence of specific beliefs that investigators have regarding guilt presumption and confession rates.

Law enforcement professionals often have been found to possess high levels of confidence in their own ability to accurately distinguish between truthful and deceptive statements, although research findings do not support such beliefs (Vrij, 2008). This (over) confidence stems from selectively perceived on-the-job experiences and training programs that promise to raise judgment accuracy (Kassin et al., 2007; Leo, 1996a). Many professionals perform only slightly better than lay people, if at all (Memon, Vrij, & Bull, 2003; Vrij, 2008), although Mann, Vrij, and Bull (2004) did find superior lie/truth detection rates. However, it remains that most studies tend to find such accuracy rates hovering around the level of chance. Since the Slovenian interrogation manual states techniques that promise to increase lie and truth detection accuracy, it was further hypothesized that Slovenian police officers would express overconfidence in their own ability to accurately distinguish truth from lies in suspects' accounts.

Finally, it was also thought that there might be differences in the use of interrogation techniques between those who investigate general (i.e. everyday), organized and white-collar crimes. According to some research findings (see Ragatz, Fremouw, & Baker, 2012), and also official statistics, (Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of the Interior, 2015), those who are suspected of committing white-collar or organized crimes are (i) more informed of legislation; (ii) better educated; and (iii) generally older than those who may have committed less premeditated 'general' crimes such as rape, theft, burglary, etc. As such, it was assumed that investigators apply varying interrogation techniques, differing in respect of the type of suspect they encounter in these three areas of crime.

Method

Participants

Since, it was believed by the researchers that interrogations in Slovenia are rarely if ever recorded, establishing what happens in interviews demanded eliciting the views of those present. As obtaining the views of suspects was found to be highly problematic, it was decided to seek beliefs of police interviewers. As such, a questionnaire was sent to all 260 criminal investigators employed by the Slovenian police in all its 8 Police Directorates. Eighty-six (33%) of them voluntarily and anonymously responded by returning filled questionnaires, (74 men and 12 women). On average participants were 40 years old ($M = 40.38$; $SD = 5.86$; Range = 20–51), with 15 years of police working experience ($M = 14.60$; $SD = 7.14$; Range = 1–31). Most (66%) had received training in investigative interviewing only once, which they reported as undertaking at the beginning of their career. Regarding their field of work, 52 (61%) of them were specialized in the investigation of a general crime (crimes against persons, property, and morality), 21 (24%) in organized crime, and 11 (13%) in white-collar crime. These numbers approximately reflect the actual distribution of criminal investigators among specific fields of work at Slovenian police. Those investigators who worked in the field of general crime were older ($M = 41.46$; $SD = 6.03$) than those who worked in the field of organized crime ($M = 37.86$; $SD = 5.45$) and white-collar crime ($M = 40.05$; $SD = 5.22$). They also had more years of professional experience ($M = 16.69$; $SD = 6.91$) than organized crime investigators ($M = 11.14$; $SD = 5.83$) and white-collar crime investigators ($M = 11.27$; $SD = 7.49$).

Instrument

A survey instrument was designed to obtain self-report data from criminal investigators. The questionnaire was created following two previous studies by Kassin et al. (2007) and Leo (1996a). Items of the questionnaire were chosen by discussion with three senior experienced criminal investigators. Participants were asked 20 questions regarding how often they had employed specific interrogation techniques listed (see Table 1). They answered by marking the appropriate value on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = sometimes, 4 = often, and 5 = always). The participants were also requested to estimate (i) the number of interrogation techniques they had used per interrogation (from a supplied list that was itself generated from the extant literature that reflected the techniques invariably used during such interrogations); (ii) the percentage of full or partial

confessions they estimated they gained from suspects; and (iii) the percentage of interviews where the suspect did not make any admissions of wrongdoing. Participants were also asked to estimate (i) the average number of occasions during an investigation that a suspect is interrogated; (ii) the average duration of each interrogation; and (iii) the length of the longest interrogation they can recall they had undertaken. At the end of the questionnaire participants gave an estimation of the percentage of interrogations they conducted that were audio or video recorded. Participants were also asked to estimate (in percentage terms) how frequently they could detect whether a suspect is either telling the truth or lying, and also how frequently they believed the suspect was guilty before an interrogation started. The questionnaire was placed on a specially created web page on the internal police server in a form of an online survey.

Procedure

All criminal investigators employed by the Police were invited by an 'all-staff' e-mail message to take part in the survey. In the message, there was a request for their participation, in which it was explained why and how their participation would be voluntary and anonymous. Following the explanation of the survey's purpose, which was for planning future training, the person responsible for the survey was named (i.e. the first author who is not employed by the Police). The email invitations were sent by two criminal investigators (senior in terms of experience, and respected expertise by their peers, but not in rank). After one week the second invitation for the participation followed and after the second week, the survey was closed.

Results

Distributions of variables differed significantly from the normal distribution. Omitting outliers and the use of log transformation were insufficient procedures to justify the use of multivariate statistical analysis. Participants' answers regarding the frequency of usage of specific interrogation techniques are presented in the [Table 1](#), where interrogation techniques are listed according to the value of the mean rank. The findings suggest that the two most frequently used techniques concern those that may be considered as less problematic, although thereafter more questionable techniques that are typical of an accusatory interrogation model appear.

Besides the use of specific interrogation techniques, other characteristics of interrogation practice were investigated, see [Table 2](#). Among the interesting findings are a confidence expressed by investigators in their ability to detect deception at rates similarly found in other studies (see Vrij, 2008). Further, the level of guilt presumption was found to be even higher, while on the other hand, respondents believed that they had never experienced a suspect making a false confession.

To test possible differences among participants who investigate general crimes, organized or white-collar crimes, Mann–Whitney *U* tests were used. In [Table 3](#), only significant differences between pairs of participants' groups are presented, negligible and non-significant differences are not presented. It seems that most noticeable differences between groups of criminal investigators are (i) general crime investigators conduct the longest

Table 1. The frequency of usage of specific interrogation technique.

| Interrogation technique | <i>M</i> (SD) | Mean rank ^a |
|--|---------------|------------------------|
| Confronting the suspect with evidence of his/her guilt | 4.06 (0.99) | 16.89 |
| Identifying contradictions in the suspect's story | 4.02 (1.07) | 16.73 |
| Conducting the interrogation in a small and private room | 4.05 (1.07) | 16.35 |
| Establishing sympathy and gaining the suspect's trust | 3.38 (1.00) | 14.38 |
| Isolating suspect from family and friends | 3.43 (1.22) | 14.22 |
| Appealing to the suspect's religion or conscience | | |
| Offering the suspect moral justifications and excuses | | |
| Alluding or pretending to have an evidence of guilt | | |
| Using good cop/bad cop routine | | |
| Minimizing the moral seriousness of the offence | | |
| Appealing to the suspect's self-interests | | |
| Having the suspect take a polygraph and telling him he/she failed it | | |
| Exaggerating the facts or the nature of the offence | | |
| Yelling at suspect | | |
| Using praise or flattery | | |
| Showing the suspect photographs of the crime scene or victim | | |
| Expressing impatience, frustration or anger at the suspect | | |
| Threatening the suspect with consequences for not cooperating | | |
| Touching the suspect in a friendly manner | | |
| Physically intimidating the suspect | | |

Notes: *n* = 86. Answers on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always).

^aFriedman test.

interrogations and (ii) general crime investigators also use polygraph tests more often than other two groups of investigators.

Investigation of correlations among variables found that participants' years of working experience correlates positively (albeit very modestly) with the share of full confessions actually gained, $r(84) = .19$, $p < .03$, with the length of an average interrogation, $r(84) = .20$, $p < .02$, and with the share of interrogations video recorded, $r(84) = .20$, $p < .03$. No other significant correlation was found.

Discussion

The current study set out to gather Slovenian police officer's perceptions of their interview practices. Criminal investigators, who were trained according to the interrogation manual

Table 2. Participants' opinions regarding specific characteristics of interrogations they conducted.

| Participants' estimations | Mdn | <i>M</i> (SD) | Range of scores |
|--|-----|---------------|-----------------|
| The number of interrogation techniques per interview | 3 | 3.08 (1.53) | 1–7 |
| The number of interrogations per criminal case | 2 | 2.52 (2.55) | 1–10 |
| Duration of an interview (hours) | 1.5 | 2 (1.4) | 0.4–10.5 |
| Duration of the longest interrogation undertook (hours) | 4 | 5 (2.5) | 1.3–12 |
| The share of interrogations video recorded (%) | 0 | 6 (12) | 0–50 |
| The share of interrogations audio recorded (%) | 0 | 7 (13) | 0–50 |
| The share of full confessions that could be gained (%) | 30 | 32 (16) | 10–80 |
| The share of partial confessions that could be gained (%) | 30 | 33 (15) | 10–70 |
| The share of cases where no admission could be gained (%) | 40 | 42 (22) | 0–100 |
| The share of full confessions actually gained (%) | 50 | 55 (21) | 0–90 |
| The accuracy of lie detection (%) | 70 | 69 (18) | 30–100 |
| The accuracy of detecting the truth (%) | 60 | 63 (22) | 10–100 |
| The proportion of guilty persons among all suspects (%) | 90 | 84 (15) | 10–100 |
| The number of witnessed cases where an innocent person falsely confessed | 0 | 1.01 (2.99) | 0–20 |

Note: *n* = 86.

Table 3. Differences among general crime, organized crime, and white collar crime investigators in the sample.

| Variable | Mann–Whitney <i>U</i> test | | |
|---|---|--|--------------------|
| | General crime | Organized crime | White-collar crime |
| Having the suspect take a polygraph test ^a | Mdn = 3 <i>U</i> = 329.0, <i>p</i> = .006, <i>r</i> = .30 ^b | Mdn = 2 <i>U</i> = 99.0, <i>p</i> = .000, <i>r</i> = .38 ^c | Mdn = 1 |
| Expressing impatience, frustration or anger at the suspect ^a | Mdn = 1.5 | Mdn = 2 <i>U</i> = 64.5, <i>p</i> = .042, <i>r</i> = .26 ^d | Mdn = 1 |
| Yelling at a suspect ^a | Mdn = 2 | <i>U</i> = 167.0, <i>p</i> = .014, <i>r</i> = .27 | Mdn = 1 |
| Using good cop/bad cop routine ^a | Mdn = 3 | <i>U</i> = 53.0, <i>p</i> = .012, <i>r</i> = .29 | Mdn = 1 |
| The length of an average interrogation (hours) | Mdn = 2 <i>U</i> = 172.0, <i>p</i> = .029, <i>r</i> = .23 | Mdn = 3 <i>U</i> = 63.0, <i>p</i> = .038, <i>r</i> = .23 | Mdn = 1 |
| Duration of the longest interrogation undertook (hours) | Mdn = 2 <i>U</i> = 161.5, <i>p</i> = .019, <i>r</i> = .25 | Mdn = 1 <i>U</i> = 204.0, <i>p</i> = .000, <i>r</i> = .46 | Mdn = 1.5 |
| The number of interrogations per criminal case | Mdn = 5 <i>U</i> = 163.5, <i>p</i> = .024, <i>r</i> = .24 | Mdn = 4 <i>U</i> = 378.5, <i>p</i> = .039, <i>r</i> = .22 | Mdn = 4 |
| | | <i>U</i> = 149.0, <i>p</i> = .012, <i>r</i> = .27 | |
| | Mdn = 2 | Mdn = 2 <i>U</i> = 176.0, <i>p</i> = .033, <i>r</i> = .23 | Mdn = 1 |

Note: *n* = 86.

^aAnswers on a five-point Likert scale (1 = never, 5 = always).

^bDifference between 1st and 2nd column.

^cDifference between 1st and 3rd column.

^dDifference between 2nd and 3rd column.

that resembles accusatory interrogation methods, were requested to estimate the frequency and variety of interrogation techniques used in their practice. They were also asked about other specific characteristics of their interview practice. According to participants' estimations, a typical interrogation of a suspect in Slovenia lasts about 90 minutes (Table 2). This finding differs from field studies conducted elsewhere in the world, where it was found that interrogations lasted either up to 30 minutes (Cassell & Hayman, 1996) or less than one hour (Leo, 1996a). However, the present study found accordance with the study by Kassin et al. (2007), where average interrogations lasted 96 minutes. This may mean that Slovenian investigators have motivation to search for information, but their investigative efficiency is unknown since no assessment framework that evaluates interviewers' skills exists in Slovenia. It was also found in the survey that interviewers typically use three interrogation techniques, which is fewer than the five found by Leo (1996a). The small number of interrogation techniques reckoned to be used in Slovenia may be associated with insufficient training of criminal investigators or that officers redact from the guidance and training those techniques they most feel comfortable with; a situation found in other studies (Walsh & Milne, 2007). As such, it may be the case that interviewers are not familiar with (or have forgotten) other interrogation techniques. Results show that suspects are interviewed twice per investigation, similar to the findings of Kassin et al. (2007). Typically, respondents stated that interrogations in Slovenia are not recorded. While the reason for not recording interrogations is not known, it may be due to matters such as a current lack of equipment available to the Slovenian police or their resistance to using it, where it is available. Such resistance may be due to perceiving recordings as a way others gaining control over their working practices by such facility to monitor

interview performance. However, research shows that police organizations elsewhere, which have videotaped interrogations, have generally reacted favourably to this practice since it offers many collateral benefits, such as increased accountability (Sullivan, 2004; Sullivan, Vail, & Anderson, 2008). The other possible reason – lack of equipment – may be connected more with little realization of the importance of the recordings than with an issue relative to lack of funding. Without recordings opportunities for either interview assessment or supervision can be missed, with investigators receiving inadequate feedback on their own performance. As such, until recordings become commonplace, we argue that there is less chance to improve interviewing performance.

Considering the presence of coercive interrogation techniques in the practice of Slovenian criminal investigators, our findings suggest that some of them are used (see Table 1). The survey found that the most used interrogation technique is confronting the suspect with evidence of guilt. This should not be so surprising as this technique is a requirement of the Criminal Law. As such, the suspect must be acquainted with the evidence held against him or her before questioning starts. From the present study, it seems that techniques that are typically considered as coercive are claimed to be used occasionally. Some of them, such as (i) appealing to the suspect's conscience; (ii) offering moral justifications; (iii) alluding to have evidence of guilt at hand; (iv) using good/bad cop routine; (v) minimizing the seriousness of the crime; and (vi) appealing to the suspect's self-interest, are all proposed by the Slovenian interrogation manual. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that some of this interrogative guidance may well have been transferred into investigative practice. However, it should also not be surprising that wholesale transference from the written guidance to interrogative practice has apparently not taken place. Prior studies have regularly found that adaptations take place (Dando et al., 2009; Kebbell et al., 1999; King & Snook, 2009; Leo, 1996a), and that reasons for this deviation from official instructions also includes a depreciation of skill levels over time after training, particularly when officers perceive certain tasks as highly complex (Griffiths, 2008). The lack of any systematic approach to subordinate, peer, or self-evaluation has also been argued to be a cause of officers' failure to follow advised approaches (Walsh & Milne, 2007), as well as being contributory to unsatisfactory performance even after training (Walsh & Milne, 2008).

Threatening, physically intimidating or touching the suspect, were stated as hardly ever used. This may well reflect reality since threatening the suspect is forbidden by the Criminal Law and in most cases, lawyers are present at the interrogations. Generally, these results are consistent with findings of Kassir et al. (2007) in the USA. One of the possible explanations for the existence of this consistency may be that participants in the USA and Slovenian sample receive similar training. However, the similarity between samples might also appear because police personnel generally tend to over-rely on similar 'common-sense' beliefs about the efficiency of specific interrogation techniques (Gallini, 2010; Masip, Herrero, Garrido, & Barba, 2011). One of these typical 'common-sense' beliefs is that investigators think that they presume most to be guilty before the interrogation commences. The great majority of participants in the current study also estimated that most suspects they deal with are guilty (Table 2). This finding is consistent with those in earlier research. For example, Stephenson and Moston (1993), and Walsh and Milne (2007), each found that most interviewers were sure of the suspect's guilt before they commenced an interview. Such proneness to perceive a suspect as guilty raises concerns

because it may heighten the risk for biased, confession seeking police work with the use of coercive interrogation techniques (Kassin & Gudjonsson, 2004; Meissner & Kassin, 2002) and may contribute to inadequate preparation and planning ahead of interviews (Walsh & Milne, 2007).

Participants stated that half of their interrogations resulted suspects providing full confessions (Table 2). However, somewhat contrarily, they also believe that around a third of the time, it is possible to gain a full confession. Such a difference may well be explained by an over-confidence in their own ability, possibly influenced by selectively recalled professional experiences (Leo, 1996a). Nevertheless, the proportion of full confessions that are claimed to be gained is much higher than in other studies (e.g. Kassin et al., 2007; Leo, 1996a). This finding may also mean that participants' interrogative style is predominately confession oriented and coercive. By participants' estimations their longest interrogations lasted approximately four hours which is below the threshold of six hours above which, according to some experts (e.g. Blair, 2005; Feld, 2006), interrogations are most likely turn into coercive ones. Therefore, if interrogations really are predominately confession oriented and coercive, this may well be associated with the interrogation techniques applied.

Participants estimated that most of the time they can detect truth or lies, consistent with other studies (e.g. Mann et al., 2004; Walsh & Milne, 2007). Slovenian police officers only receive training at the beginning of their career, and it bears a resemblance to the Reid technique (Inbau et al., 2013). As such, training is less likely to be the significant source of overconfidence. It is asserted that the more likely reason for their high levels of confidence in suspects' guilt may be due to professional experience again being selectively recalled. Indeed, elsewhere, it has been found that some police officers believe that they possess a 'sixth sense' which helps them to regularly detect lies (Leo, 1996b).

The current study also examined whether there were any differences in interrogative practices among particular types of criminal investigators (see Table 3). However, only a few significant differences were found. General crime investigators stated they are more likely to use the polygraph than the other two groups of participants that completed the survey (i.e. white-collar and organized crime investigators). When the polygraph is used in Slovenia the Comparison Question Test is employed most of the time (Areh, 2011). Such an interrogation technique could be considered as coercive (Kassin, 2008). Most probably the polygraph is used more often in general crime interrogation because suspects of these particular crimes tend to be more naïve than others. Suspects supposedly involved in white-collar or organized crime may be more experienced and informed, so they refuse polygraph testing knowing that the refusal does not possess any negative consequences, as they are likely aware that the polygraph test has no evidential value in the Slovenian courts. White-collar crime suspects may be confronted with fewer coercive interrogation techniques (and indeed, fewer interrogations per case) than general or organized crime suspects. This finding may be as a result of white-collar crime suspects being better educated, more experienced and knowledgeable of their rights (Ragatz et al., 2012). They may be more affluent too, being able to employ better lawyers to represent their interests. In turn, white-collar crime investigators can often have the luxury of undertaking a more thorough investigation before interviewing a suspect, while in other types of crime there may have to be an early interview in the investigation before all the evidence has

been gathered. Therefore, differences between groups of investigators may be due to the nature of their job role.

Finally, it was found that more experienced criminal investigators conduct longer interrogations than their less experienced counterparts, possibly reflective of their greater expertise. These more experienced investigators also video-record their interrogations more often. This also may be indicative of their greater confidence, knowing that they feel they have less to fear from any re-playing of such recorded interrogations.

A study that is wholly dependent on police officers' views as a proxy of what might actually occur in interrogations will inevitably possess potential limitations. We know neither how seriously nor how reliably officers provided their views. However, the consistency of the answers, the reasonable response rate, along with how the findings overlap with other studies, provide a degree of validity to the study, overcoming the inherent concerns of such self-reporting methodology (including participants providing socially desirable replies, since our methodology assured them of anonymity).

Conclusion

From the present study, it seems that interrogations in Slovenia cannot be labelled as entirely coercive, although some coercive techniques, especially in the context of general crime investigation, are said to be used. The reason may be in their promotion in the Slovenian interrogation manual. It would appear that the manual needs revision, cautioning its readers about the dangers of using those interrogation techniques that have been argued as ones that can significantly increase the risk of false confessions (Meissner et al., 2012). Police interrogations have been the subject of a growing body of scientific research. Researchers can offer law-enforcement guidance on what techniques to adopt (such as those recommended by the PEACE model), without reducing the efficiency or effectiveness of investigative interviews. The finding that interrogations in Slovenia are almost never recorded raises a special concern because without analysing audio or video recordings it is more difficult to obtain insight into actual interrogative practices in the field, leaving us to rely upon practitioner perceptions. Namely, it is recognized that what investigators say they do and what they actually do in their professional practice may be quite different (O'Neill & Milne, 2014). Therefore, the recording of interrogations would allow researchers into the interrogation room to both enable more valid research to be conducted and offer opportunities for senior police officers to assess performance of their subordinate colleagues to improve interviewing practice. Such supervisory feedback has been found to be critical component in improving interviewing performance (Lamb, Sternberg, Orbach, Esplin, & Mitchell, 2002; Lamb et al., 2000). It is therefore concluded that a regular practice of recording investigative interviews would be a first step in Slovenia (but only that) to move investigators away from accusatory interrogation techniques and towards investigative interviews that gather reliable information.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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